



Report to Council

Date:	30 November 2022
Title:	Buckinghamshire Electoral Review
Relevant councillor(s):	All
Author and/or contact officer:	Nick Graham, Service Director, Legal and Democratic. Contact officer Glenn Watson, Principal Governance Officer.
Ward(s) affected:	All

Recommendations:

- (1) to adopt the recommendations made by the Standards & General Purposes Committee, as set out in Annex 1, as the Council's response to the Local Government Boundary Commission's consultation on proposed wards for Buckinghamshire Council
- (2) to ask the Service Director Legal & Democratic Services to submit the comments to the Commission by the consultation deadline of 5 December.

Reason for decision:

Council asked the Standards & General Purposes Committee to make recommendations to it on a response to the Local Government Boundary Commission's proposed wards for Buckinghamshire Council. The Committee has recommended certain changes which it believes would achieve a better balance of the statutory criteria. Council is asked to adopt these recommendations, for submission to the Commission.

1. Background:

1.1 On 2 August 2022, the Local Government Boundary Commission published its proposed pattern of wards for Buckinghamshire Council to apply from the Council elections in 2025. This followed a public consultation earlier this year during which the Commission received submissions from various sources, including this Council. In the event, the Commission did not follow this Council's submission. As such, Council agreed that the Standards & General Purposes Committee should advise Council on the appropriate response to the current consultation. The Commission is proposing a pattern of 51

wards with, variously, one, two or three member representation, achieving 98 members overall. The Commission's proposals can be found on their [website here](#).

1.2 The Commission will of course consider any comments on its proposals. However, it is not seeking detailed alternative proposals as in earlier stages. Rather, the Commission is minded to implement the pattern of wards it has now proposed and is seeking comments on their practicality. The Commission has invited views specifically on 10 of its proposals. This is where the Commission felt it needed further local evidence to verify its proposals.

1.3 In approaching its work, the Committee was assisted by a cross-party Electoral Review Working Group. The Group invited all members of the Council to comment to it on the Commission's proposals. The Group, and then the Committee, addressed itself as follows:

- A) Reviewing each of the 10 proposals on which the Commission invited comment;
- B) Reviewing any other refinement suggested by local members

1.4 The Committee's recommendations are listed on **Annex 1**. Where a change to the Commission's proposals is recommended, a plan illustrating the change, and how it differs from the Commission's original proposals, is included at **Annex 2**.

2. Recommendations of the Committee

2.1 The Committee was mindful only to suggest changes where they substantially improved upon the Commission's own proposal. In most cases, the change actively builds on the Commission's working assumptions that:

- A) Parishes be kept whole where possible
- B) Rural wards are not too geographical spread out and diverse
- C) Electoral variance is within acceptable limits
- D) Urban and rural areas should not be mixed unless there are clear community identity reasons

2.2 In one instance (Chiltern Ridges), the Committee felt that the Commission's ward was too large, diverse and artificial. It has therefore recommended that the constituent parishes be located instead, as appropriate, in Chesham North, Chesham South or Chalfont St Giles & Little Chalfont Wards.

2.3 In three cases, the Committee has recommended that the Commission's individual wards be merged with another in the interests of community identity while retaining electoral variance:

- A) Grendon Underwood with Steeple Claydon
- B) Horwood with Winslow
- C) Newton Longville with Quainton

2.4 In other cases, the Committee is proposing a modification to the Commission's proposals in the interests of community identity.

- A) Buckingham Ward: the addition of Leckhampstead Parish (from Horwood Ward)
- B) Iver and Gerrards Cross & Denham: recognition that New Denham has no connection with the Commission’s proposed Iver Ward; and that Denham Parish should be kept whole within Gerrards Cross & Denham. Similarly, the parish boundary for Gerrards Cross should be restored and kept whole
- C) Little Marlow Parish: to remain whole (e.g. within Chiltern Villages) rather than split as proposed by the Commission
- D) Penn, Tylers Green & Loudwater and Beaconsfield: transfer of certain areas (of the former) which more clearly identify with Beaconsfield. An additional benefit is a reduction in the Commission’s currently excessive variance for Penn, Tylers Green & Loudwater
- E) Terriers & Amersham Hill and Totteridge & Bowerdean: transferring certain polling districts and redistributing councillor numbers to achieve one 3 member ward and one 1 member ward (instead of two 2 member wards). The resulting wards to be Terriers & Totteridge (3) and Bowerdean (1).

3. Next steps

3.1 The Council was successful in persuading the Commission to extend its deadline from October (originally) to 5 December. The Council’s submission must be sent to the Commission by that date. The Committee is seeking formal endorsement by the Council, of these proposals, as a corporate response. It remains the case, as at other stages of the review, that any member is free as an individual to send their own personal submissions to the Commission.

3.2 The Commission’s revised timetable envisages the following. None of these further stages involves input from the Council, unless the Commission wish to query any of the recommendations made to it before final publication.

Final report We publish the Commission’s recommendations	28 February 2023	
Order laid in Parliament This makes the recommendations law	Spring 2023	
Effective date The new arrangements apply to elections after this date	May 2025	

4. Legal and financial implications

4.1 This report does not contain any financial implications. At present, the Council is participating in a consultation on the future electoral boundaries of the Council. There is no cost in responding to the consultation and any outcome will not be effected until the election of 2025.

4.2 In considering these recommendations, the Committee is fulfilling the delegation granted to it by Council. The Council is a statutory consultee to the electoral review.

5. Corporate implications

5.1 The outcome of the electoral review will shape the nature of the Council's elected member representation from the May 2025 elections and as such will have significant corporate implications at that time. For now, there are no current corporate implications.